

25. 8. 1913

21 p1 cmc 302

Sir

Your candid & very encouraging article on the difficulties of the
'Preacher' (Aug. 22nd) induces me to write before you the layman's
point of view. It seems to me that we have some reason to be con-
fident only in our clergy but in the quality of their preaching. Persons who
wander a good deal on the Continent in the summer months must
be impressed by the comparatively large & devout congregations that
assemble for the English Church Service, & very much so by the quality
of the preaching which, if not often brilliant, is almost always sincere
& edifying. All the same there is some sense of futility both
in the lay & clerical mind. After a long time of listening to
sermons, the hearer has hardly a sense of progression or of accumu-
lation. It is probably the sincere modesty of the preachers which
makes them unwilling to delegate the sermon to the lower place in
the office of public worship. The labour laid on the ~~set~~ clergy seems
enormous to an outsider. The task of preparing & delivering 100 or
150 that disconnected essays in a year, say at least £1000 in 10 yrs,
with the dense opposition in a firm task of accomplishing a
continuous work, must be very laborious & a little depressing. The
conclusion is, not that sermons are less better & more inspiring
but that they keep up a remarkable spiritual level. At the same
time there is something wrong. The deliberate edifying of a house
of God should, no doubt, be the preacher's aim rather than the
piling up of a prodigious heap of unattached pebbles. A perception
of this fact must be deeply discouraging to most preachers, however
excellent their sermons. However grateful & appreciative their
congregations.

^{the}
I have intended to call ~~your~~ ^{the} article I have referred to very
encouraging but perhaps it is a symptom of "divine discontent" it
may have struck many of us that our Church has a unique
opportunity in nurturing a more complete Christianity than
the world has yet seen.

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Little number of that are
Mountain Partridge
depression

The non-Anglican Protestant bodies, though they may be no longer conscious of the fact, seem to be still hindered by that "lie of the mill" described as 'imputed righteousness' which may belong to the Pauline philosophy, but not to the philosophy of our Lord as expressed in His own teaching. The Roman Church has developed a so-called Petrine philosophy, upon a single saying of our Lord. In the teaching of the Orthodox Church we need not enquire into just now, but the Anglican Church seems to be on the whole definitely Christian in the sense that it accepts the "I say unto you" of our Lord as final authoritative. But I wonder if we are in error in neglecting the science of the proportion of things? Following the lead of the Catholic Church, however, we belong, do we confine our meditations too exclusively to the Immaculate, or the Atonement, or what we call the moral teaching of the Gospel? Could not our Church make room for the teaching of the one Consummated Philosophy, delivered by our Lord, with extraordinary emphasis of illustration, with exquisite poetic illustration, with incessant endeavor during the three years of His ministry? It would seem that our Lord's appeal is far more profoundly intellectual than emotional or moral. We would have us - "discern", "know", "understand", all of which must be accomplished by intellectual effort; not the effort of analysis, but of spiritual insight. I wonder would it be possible for our clergy listening before us this progressive Christian teaching, with the help of some chronological harmony of the Gospel, requiring, for example, that their people should definitely study sections after sections of the Gospel history, week by week; commit to Church with their minds alert & their hearts inclined, should be ready for a sermon dealing perhaps with some point of special interest in the passage studied so that the work of preacher & people should be definite & progressive.

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In a sermon a week on these ^alines would still be ^alesson 3
or two sermons would ^adeal with ~~the~~ ^aset lessons, Epistle or Gospel,
none of which could ~~be~~ we do without.

And I suppose more or only read the Lectonary, with however
much pleasure ^{or} what I am venturing to suggest is an
effort to improve, realise, bring our spiritual insight to bear,
week by week, on a comparatively short passage of a Gospel
narrative. Of course this is Utopian but then Utopia is the
only country at which the traveller aims.

I write with very sincere diffidence, knowing that there may be
things in the way which I do not suspect; but perhaps a correspondence
in your columns will tend to show us the limitations & the
possibilities. Meantime I beg to remain in consideration
of those matters, Yours truly,

a faithful layman.

W. H. W. W.